Pelling, John

A sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons at St. Margaret's Westminster.

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A

SERMON

Preach'd before the Honourable

House of Commons,

AT

St. *Margaret's Westminster*,

On *Monday*, *Jan.* 31. $170\frac{8}{9}$.

BEING THE

ANNIVERSARY FAST of the *Martyrdom* of King CHARLES I.

By *JOHN PELLING*, D. D.
Rector of St. *Ann's Westminster.*

Martis. Primo Die Feb. 1708.

Order'd, *That the Thanks of this House be given to Dr.* Pelling, *for the Excellent Sermon by him Preach'd before this House Yesterday, at St.* Margaret's Westminster. *And that he be desir'd to Print the same; and that Sir* Thomas Hanmer *and Mr.* Bromley *do acquaint him therewith.*

Paul Jodrell, *Cl. Dom. Com.*

LONDON:

Printed by *J. B.* for JONAH BOWYER, at the *Rose* in *Ludgate-street*, 1709.

[redacted]

EXOD. XX. Part of Ver. 5.

I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, viſiting the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third and fourth Generation of them that hate Me.

AMong the ſeveral Motives made uſe of by God, to diſcourage Men from breaking in upon his moſt holy and juſt Laws: The fear of Puniſhment, he is ſo often pleas'd to inflict in this Life, is one of thoſe, by which he impreſſes an Awe on the Minds of ſuch Perſons, as will not ſuffer themſelves to be influenc'd by the more ſoft and endearing Methods of his Goodneſs. In the great variety of which Judgments, my Text informs us of one of a ſorer Kind, he has denounc'd againſt Sinners of the firſt Rank; namely, *That he will viſit the Offences of Parents upon Children, unto the third and fourth Generation of them that HATE him.* From which ſolemn Declaration made by God, and interwoven into the Body of thoſe Moral Precepts, which were deſign'd to be of perpetual Obligation: We have the greateſt Reaſon to acquieſce in the Truth of the Fact now before us; That God Almighty, upon ſome *ſpecial* and *very extraordinary* Occaſions, will viſit the Iniquity of the Fathers upon their Children; Or the Sins *of one* Generation on thoſe that ſucceed it.

However, ſuch in all Ages has been the Degeneracy of Mankind, that even the moſt powerful Reſtraints have not been ſufficient to keep 'em

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'em back from Sins of the most presumptuous and dangerous Kind; how dismal and lasting soever they had reason to apprehend the Consequences of might be: Yet they had the hardiness to venture on the commission of 'em; and in defiance of the most sore Judgments denounc'd by God, to run the hazzard of 'em themselves, and to transmit the Guilt of 'em to Posterity.

Of the general Truth now before us, setting aside the Scripture-Examples of that kind, we have a plain Instance in the surprizing Wickedness of our Forefathers, which gave occasion *to the Rise*, and *is a just* Cause of *the Continuance* of this *Days mournful Solemnity.* For however many of 'em might have been deluded upon their first setting out, it was impossible for 'em not to have fully discern'd at length all the fatal Consequences of that unnatural Rebellion, in which they were engag'd. They must *have foreseen* the Calamities to which many Thousands of Persons would inevitably be expos'd: *The plentiful* effusion of Christian Blood, caus'd by the mutual Dissentions of *Fellow-Subjects* and *Fellow-Christians*, work'd up to the highest pitch of Enmity against each other; The *certain* Destruction of the Ecclesiastical and Civil Form of Government *happily establish'd* in these Kingdoms, and *of One* of the best of Princes plac'd at the Head of 'em: I say, the *Contrivers* and *Actors* of this Days Villany, must have been more or less sensible of all this, and *of the* heinous Guilt they were then going to involve themselves and Posterity in, and yet they were not afraid to leave such a standing Monument of *National* Wickedness? *so sure* a pledge *of lasting* Vengeance behind 'em.

Under these Circumstances, Is it to be imagin'd, That God Almighty should be an unconcern'd Spectator of Actions so notoriously Sinful, of Persons

that had gone ſuch lengths in Wickedneſs! had ſo far exceeded the common meaſure of Corruption? On the other Hand, might it not more reaſonably have been expected, by thoſe who more wiſely conſidered the ends of his Providence, that he ſhould *viſit the Sins of ſuch Fathers upon their Children*, (as he has declared in the Text he will do upon the like Occaſions) even unto the *third and fourth Generation of them that HATE him.*

In diſcourſing more particularly on which Words, it may not be improper,

Firſt, To offer ſomething in Vindication of this way of God's dealing with Mankind, in viſiting upon ſome extraordinary Occaſions, the Iniquity *of the Fathers* upon *the Children*; Or the Sins of *one* Generation *on ſucceeding* Ages. From whence I ſhall proceed,

Secondly, To apply the general Doctrine contain'd in the Text, *to the particular* Sin, *or rather* complication of Sins, we are now deploring in God's Houſe. And, in the

Third and laſt place, To lay down ſome Directions neceſſary to be obſerv'd, in order to prevent a farther Viſitation of that crying Sin upon us, and our Poſterity.

Firſt then, I propoſe to offer ſomething in Vindication of this way of God's dealing with Mankind, in viſiting, upon ſome extraordinary Occaſions, the *Iniquity* of the Fathers upon the Children, *Or the Sins of one* Generation *on ſucceeding* Ages.

The Difficulties attending which Doctrine, will, I preſume, be fully clear'd up by a due Conſideration of theſe three Things,

Firſt, Of the more than ordinary Malignity of thoſe Sins which God is provok'd to viſit on the Children of wicked Parents.

Secondly, Of the manner after which he will viſit thoſe Sins.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Of the Character and Qualifications of those Persons on whom he determines thus to visit the Sins of their Fathers.

First, Then it will be of some use to us, in order to free the Doctrine of the Text from the difficulties that may seem to accompany it, to consider the more than ordinary Malignity of those Sins, which God is provok'd to visit upon the Off-spring of wicked Parents. The Sin more particularly pointed at in the Text, is *that of Idolatry*, consider'd under different Views; which it must be confess'd is a Sin of so very *absurd* and *heinous* a Nature, so *directly contrary* to the most natural Notions of God implanted in the Soul of every Man, and *withal includes* so high a Degree of Contempt of him, that no wonder he should set a distinguishing mark of his Displeasure, on such *stupid* and *profligately* wicked Persons, as should presume to worship the Creature more than the Creator; or to change the Glory of the incorruptible God, into Images made like to corruptible Man, *Rom*, 1. 23.

Other Sins upon which the Curse in the Text may likewise be suppos'd to be entail'd, are such as in their Nature include *an open* Defiance of, and Hostility against God; as we learn from the Declaration in the Text, importing *That he will visit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third and fourth Generation of them that HATE him.* Under which general Term, jointly applicable both to the *Fathers* and the *Descendants* from 'em, we must rank all presumptuous Offenders who Sin with an high Hand, and are not afraid to express their avow'd Contempt of Gods Laws, by an open and audacious violation of them.

Again, 2*dly*, Whereas it is said in the Text, that *God will visit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children*, this Visitation must be understood to imply no more than the infliction of Temporal Evils

only. For *as* the Virtues of Parents, how eminent ſoever, will not be imputed for Righteouſneſs to a degenerate and wicked Poſterity: So neither will their Vices, if they ſhould prove no leſs Notorious, be matter of Condemnation to them, any otherwiſe than as they ſhall provoke Gods Vengeance, by preſuming to tread in the ſame crooked Paths.

Nay, he is ſo far from viſiting *the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children* in this Senſe, that he makes thoſe temporal Evils, that befal 'em *on the account* of their Parents Sins, highly ſubſervient to the attainment of that greater Good, which will be the Reward *of their own Virtues*, in another and far better Life, For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God; *Rome* 8.28. and therefore even the Afflictions, according to the Apoſtles true meaning in that place, which may attend them in the courſe of his Providence, always for *wiſe*, *juſt* and *importent* Ends.

What has been ſaid in relation to Gods viſiting, after the manner deſcribed by us, *the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children*, is equally applicable to Viſitations of a more Publick or Private Nature; that is, of National Offences committed by multitudes of Perſons, and deſerving to be viſited on *ſucceeding* Generations. For the Puniſhments of this kind inflicted on Communities of Men, *as ſuch*, are always Temporal Judgments; very grievous indeed, in ſome Caſes, *as to their quality* and *duration*; but yet ſuch as are capable of being improv'd to the preſent and future Advantage of a People, diſpos'd to make a right and profitable uſe of 'em.

And to proceed yet farther, even the Temporal Evils denounc'd by God in the Text againſt the Off-ſpring of notoriouſly wicked Parents, are *there* ſuppos'd (*ordinarily* at leaſt) to extend no farther than

than to the *third and fourth Generation of them that Hate him*; which period of Time is therfore conceiv'd to be mention'd, to satisfy us, that God *primarily and more especially* designs to punish Sin in the immediate Authors of it; since it may be presum'd, and is often true in Fact, that wicked Parents may live to see themselves thus punish'd in those that come out of their Loins; whereas, on the contrary, the Goodness of Almighty God, is such *an overballance* to his vindictive Justice, that he has likewise declar'd, That *He will shew Mercy unto Thousands of them that love him, and keep his Commandments.*

Add to this, That the temporal Curse pronounc'd in the Text, must ordinarily be allow'd to *be Conditional only*; that is, to take place no otherwise, than as wicked Parents shall continue obstinate in *the* Practice *or* Defence of those Sins, by which they had provok'd the Divine Vengeance; which Condition it must be confess'd, may be superseded by a thorough Repentance; and when it is so, it may please God to respit the Execution of his Sentence, *or to* mitigate, as there shall be sufficient Reason, the Severity of it.

Lastly, For a more clear and full Vindication of the Justice of Gods proceeding, in visiting, upon some special Occasions, the *Sins of the Fathers upon the Children*, 'twill be necessary, that we consider farther the *Character* and *Qualifications* of those Persons, upon whom he determines to Visit in the manner above mention'd, the Sins of their Forefathers. For we must not imagine that he punishes even with Temporal Evils (according to the usual Methods of his Providence) the Sins of *guilty* Parents on a *guiltless* Off-spring. For in such Cases, that of the Prophet *Ezekiel* holds true (not in reality interfering with Doctrine of the Text) that the Son shall not bear

the Iniquity of the Father; which is God Almighty's anſwer, by the Mouth of his Prophet, to thoſe *Jews*, who had taken up that abſur'd Proverb, in derogation to his Juſtice; *The Fathers have eaten ſower Grapes, and the Childrens Teeth are ſet on Edge.* Ezek. 18. 2.

On the other Hand, there are ſeveral ways by which the *Deſcendants* from a wicked Stock may make the Guilt originally contracted by their Fathers, in ſome meaſure their *Own*; *Either* by treading in the Steps of their Anceſtors, which is not unuſual, conſidering the powerful influence of *their* bad *Principles* and *Examples*, ſtrongly inclining 'em to ſuch an Imitation; by *which and other* means, *Family Vices*, as well as *Diſeaſes*, become hereditary; Or by preſuming to *juſtify* and *defend*, or to *palliate* and *leſſen* the malignity of the Tranſgreſſions committed by them; *Or yet* farther, by not *humbling* their Souls, under a juſt and lively Senſe of the heinouſneſs of 'em; *Or laſtly*, by ſome perſonal Crimes of their own, no leſs notorious, which may juſtly provoke God to take occaſion from thence to viſit both *their own* and the Iniquity *of their* Parents upon 'em. In which ſeveral Caſes, we have no reaſon to arraign the Juſtice of Gods Dealings with Mankind, if, in purſuance of the ſolemn Declaration made in the Text, he ſhould *viſit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children, even unto the third and fourth Generation of them that HATE him.*

Eſpecially, if we proceed to add farther, what was more fully made out, under my former Head, That thoſe Judgments of God, how ſevere ſoever, may always be improv'd to *the Spiritual*, and often *Temporal* Advantage of thoſe on whom they light, if they are not wanting to themſelves in making a proper uſe of 'em; which is ſo evidently true in Fact, that Temporal Evils are ſometimes

times the only means, under God, of reclaiming *Societies* of Men, as well as *private* Perſons, from the Guilt of the moſt *daring* and *preſumptious* Sins.

For theſe and other weighty Reaſons, if notwithſtanding what has been urg'd, there ſhould ariſe *ſome particular* Caſes, which will not ſo eaſily come *under the* Rules laid down: We may conclude however in general, that God *neither is*, nor *would appear* to be unrighteous, were all the Reaſons of his Providence fully known to us. On the contrary we ought (as we are taught) to believe of His Righteouſneſs, *That it is like the great Mountains:* that is, for the *moſt part* eaſy to be ſeen like them, *and to be* diſcern'd even *afar off*; tho' it ſometimes happens, *That his ways are paſt finding out, and his Judgments like the great Deep, not to be fathom'd.*

Having thus gone through the general Doctrine of my Text, and freed it from the Exceptions, to which it may ſeem to *lie open:* Proceed we now to apply more cloſely what has been ſaid to our ſelves, by ſhewing what reaſon we have to believe, that the great and crying Sin, under a ſerious and devout Senſe of which, we are now humbling our Souls, *is one of* thoſe which God has been *pleas'd* already, and he only knows how long he will ſtill *pleaſe*, to viſit on the People of this Nation and their Poſterity.

We are here met together to commemorate the Vertues, and to lament the Misfortunes of one of the beſt of PRINCES, falling a Sacrifice *to the* brutiſh Rage, moſt *amazing* Inſolence, and *unparalel'd* Cruelty, of his own Perfidious and Mercileſs Subjects.

The Perſons, more immediately concern'd in this Bloody Tragedy, were not ſome *few Sons of* Belial only; it was the joint performance of many Thouſands

Thouſands of Perſons, cloſely confederate together, and each of 'em contributing his ſhare towards the *contrivance*, the *carrying* on, and at length *final Accompliſhment* of that ſurprizingly wicked Work.

Upon which account, if it be juſt in God, under ſome ſpecial Circumſtances, to viſit one Man's Sin (of a more deep dye) on himſelf, and his Poſterity after him; it muſt be allow'd to be more *evidently* ſo, that the complicated Guilt of ſuch vaſt Numbers of Men, ſhould not center in thoſe Perſons only, but by Gods appointment ſhould deſcend to Generations of Men, that were afterwards to be born. Eſpecially if we proceed to take a curſory view of the Wickedneſs now before us, in ſome of its Circumſtances, and Degrees of Aggravations, in which Multitudes of Perſons of all Ranks and Conditions were known, in *open Defiance* of Gods Laws, and *of the moſt ſolemn* Oaths of Duty and Allegiance, to have wilfully intereſſed themſelves.

Among the Sins of a more malignant and highly provoking Nature, which the Scriptures informs us, God has viſited on the Progeny of wicked Parents: We find the Sins *of* Rebellion againſt God, *of open* and *notorious* Oppreſſion, and above all, *that of Blood, frequently mention'd*, as juſtly deſerving to be viſited after *ſo ſevere* and *unuſal* a manner; All which Crimes were manifeſt Ingredients of that National Offence, which was openly committed againſt the Perſon of our then Lawful Sovereign. For next to an Invaſion of the Throne of God, which was the Caſe of the Apoſtate Angels, *one* of the moſt ſignal Acts of Preſumption in Men, is, *their inſulting* the Majeſty of Kings, who are Gods immediate Vice-Gerents on Earth, *By whom alone they Reign and Decree Juſtice*, Prov. 8. 15. from whom they receive their Authority, and de-

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rive a Sacredneſs on their Perſons. *For where the Word of a King is, ſays* Solomon, *there is Power, and who may ſay unto him, what doeſt thou?* Ec. 8. 4.

The fierceneſs of the Sons of Violence did not ſtop here, but they further preſum'd to invade the Rights of the ſupreme Magiſtrate, who was the Fountain of Juſtice; To caſt him out of his Vineyard by Force and Uſurpation, and at length (unreſtrain'd by the moſt ſacred Ties of Duty) *to ſtretch forth their Hands, to deſtroy the Lord's Anointed.*

To render the Guilt of which horrid Fact, not to be paralell'd in the Hiſtory of former Ages, yet more *flagrant:* Religion was made a Cloak for the Commiſſion of it, and God himſelf a Party in the Formation and Execution of that black Deſign; notwithſtanding *his* avow'd abhorrence of Blood-thirſty Men, and *his tender* Concern for thoſe who bear his own Image and Superſcription.

Add to this, *That the Breath of our Noſtrils, the Anointed of the Lord, was not only thus taken in their Pits,* but we were likewiſe depriv'd of ſuch a Perſon of whom we ſaid, that is, all ſuch as entertain'd a juſt Senſe of his incomparable Vertues ſaid, *We ſhall be ſafe under his Shaddow.* Lam. 4.20.

For what bleſſed Advantages might not a People have hop'd for, and ſecurly promis'd themſelves, under the Protection of a Prince of *ſuch* exemplary *Wiſdom* and *Goodneſs*, who ſet God always before his Face, whoſe Prayers and innumerable good Deeds would have come up *for a Memorial before him*, and in return would have *brought* down the moſt valuable Bleſſings, and have *entail'd* 'em on theſe Kingdoms? However ſuch a Prince, ſo richly adorn'd with ſo *many* publick and private Vertues, ſo *highly* deſerving to Live and Reign in the Hearts of his Subjects, was by God's Permiſſion, given up as a Prey to thoſe who

were

were the moſt unworthy *of His* and *the Divine* Protection.

All theſe Things conſider'd, ſurely the Wickedneſs of our Fore-fathers was above meaſure Sinful; and *as it* has been already viſited on the People of this Land, more or leſs from the time of its Commiſſion: So *may* it ſtill deſerve to be, if, by a ſerious Repentance, and by bringing forth ſuitable Fruits, they not endeavour to appeaſe the Divine Wrath. In order to which end, I come in the laſt place to lay down ſome Directions neceſſary to be obſerv'd by us to prevent a farther Viſitation *of this national Sin* upon us and our Poſterity.

It has already been made out under my firſt Head, That it is highly juſt in God to viſit the Sins of *Progenitors upon ſuch* an Off-ſpring, as ſhall preſume to fill up the meaſure of their Iniquity, and to transfer the Guilt of them, in ſome Degree, on themſelves, either by *treading* exactly in the ſame Steps, by *juſtifying* or *diminiſhing* the Crimes committed by them: or *by not duly humbling* their Souls under a lively Senſe of the heinouſneſs of them: or yet *farther*, by the additional Guilt of their own perſonal Impieties, no leſs notorious in themſelves and diſpleaſing to Almighty God. Upon which ſeveral Accounts, it greatly concerns the Sinful People of this Generation, many of whom have in ſome of the ways above-mention'd, made the Guilt of the Royal Martyrs Blood *their Own*, to beware of entailing ſtill the Curſe of God on themſelves, and thoſe in after Ages, by continuing unreform'd by the ſtroke of his Vengeance.

The Text accquaints us, That God Almighty is ſo jealous of his Honour, as to viſit the Sins of notoriouſly wicked Parents upon their *Children, even unto the third and fourth Generation of them that HATE him*; beyond which period of time, we cannot be aſſur'd, that he will not viſit Sins of a

more Extenſive and Complicated Guilt; as all National Offences, committed in open Defiance of his Majeſty, that Branch of it in particular, which is ſtamp't on the Perſons of Kings, muſt be allow'd to be. 'Tis *not hard* to conceive, that the many diſmal Conſequences, naturally iſſuing from this Days Tranſgreſſion, may extend to *Ages* and *Generations* of Men yet to come.

In the mean time, we are to conſider, that the number of Years determin'd in the Text, for God Almighties *viſiting*, in an Ordinrry way, *the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children*, is not yet expir'd; which Conſideration, as we tender our own immediate Welfare, and that of thoſe who ſtand in neareſt Relation to us, ought to be a powerful Motive, to raiſe in us ſuch a Godly Sorrow for this Days Offence, as ſhall work in us *a Repentance not to be Repented of*; which Repentance if it anſwers that Character, muſt bear ſome Proportion to the heinouſneſs of the Crime committed; conſequently, *What Carefulneſs ought it not to work in us, what clearing of our Selves, yea what Indignation, yea what Fear, yea what vehement Deſire, yea what Zeal, yea what Revenge?* That ſo we may endeavour each of thoſe ways to approve our ſelves in ſome meaſure clear in that Matter.

In purſnance of which great End of this Days Annual Solemnity, *Inſtead of* making it a Day of Rejoicing, and Celebrating it with *moſt Prophane* Songs of Triumph: Let us look upon it to be, what it really is in it ſelf, *a Day of Trouble, Rebuke and Blaſphemy*; *Inſtead of* Solemnizing its Return (after the impious Manner of ſome) *with Feaſtings*: let us humble our Souls after a Godly ſort, with *Prayers, Supplications, and Faſtings: Inſtead of* detracting from the Heroick Vertues of that moſt Religious and Wiſe PRINCE, let his Memory be ever Precious among us, and his Exem-

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plary Goodneſs be ſingled out as a moſt ſafe and glorious Pattern for our Imitation.

Moſt eſpecially, *let the* ſurprizing Wickedneſs of this Day, raiſe in us a juſt Deteſtation of thoſe pernicious Doctrines which made way for it; That of the Lawfulneſs of Rebellion in particular, which the Scriptures repreſent to be, *as the Sin of Witchcraft*, a kind of Combination with the Infernal Powers of Darkneſs, however *palliated* or *defended* of late; I had almoſt ſaid, *made a neceſſary* Duty; On the contrary, let it inſpire us with a *juſt* and *grateful* Senſe of the many Obligations we are under, to *eſteem* very highly, and to *obey with the* greateſt Chearfulneſs, the Powers that are now ſet over us by God,

We are all of us, 'tis to be hop'd, ſo entirely ſatisfied of the ſincere Intentions of our moſt Gracious Sovereign, to promote the true and laſting Intereſt of her Kingdoms, by the moſt ſafe and warrantable Methods, that we ſhould render ourſelves highly inexcuſable, ſhould we endeavour to fruſtrate thoſe good Deſigns, *by not* readily concurring with, *Or by any Acts* of Undutifulneſs towards Her. Whatever Apprehenſions we may ſtill have of Popery and Arbitrary Power, if there *be any juſt* Grounds for Fears of that kind, they cannot now be pretended to ſpring from the Throne, but are to be reſolv'd into the reſtleſs Endeavours of Factious Spirits, ſworn Enemies *to Monarchy*, and to the *continuance* of an Epiſcopal Church.

Laſtly, Inſtead of *Excuſing*, *Juſtifying* and *Applauding* the Wickedneſs of our Forefathers, which gave Birth to this days memorable Solemnity, let us humbly implore the Aſſiſtance of God's reſtraining Grace to keep us back, not only from treading in their Steps, but from making the leaſt Approaches that way; A Caution very neceſſary to be added to the Directions before given, and which,

I may presume to say, will be the most effectual Means, under God, of freeing us from the sad Effect of the remaing Guilt of *That*, and of placing us out of the reach *of the like* Offence.

For how many Persons, unhappily involv'd in this Days Transgression, were insensibly led on to that highest pitch of Wickedness, by gradually imbibing the Principles, and engaging in the Practices tending to it; and after they had gone too great Lengths, by putting it out of their Power to retrieve the false and dangerous Steps taken by 'em?

When the Prophet *Elisha* was commission'd by God to forewarn *Hazael* of the Evil he would certainly do, in no long time after to the Children of *Israel*, by *Setting their strong Holds on Fire, by slaying their young Men with the Sword, by dashing their Children, and ripping up their Women with Child:* The Answer he return'd to the Prophet upon the delivery of that Message, was, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do this great Thing?* Had the same Warning been given, the same Answer would doubtless have been return'd by many of those Persons that were Instrumental in bringing the sore Evils on this Church and Nation, which were the *Natural* and *Judicial* Consequences of this days Offence.

Had they been told even by a Messenger from Heaven, *that the* Methods taken by 'em for the redressing of some pretendend Grievances, would certainly be attended with Consequences far *more intolerable*; *That their Petitions and Remonstrances* would be improv'd into *open Rebellion* against their lawful Sovereign, and the *Effect* of that Rebellion would be, the *Dethroning* and *Murder* of their PRINCE, after a manner unheard of in former Ages: Upon the mention of such things, they would have express'd the like abhorrence of *those Barbarous* and *most Inhumane* Acts, as *Hazael* did. However, both *He* and *They* by hardening themselves

ſelves more and more in Sin, were at length prevail'd upon to be far more Wicked than is eaſy *for others*, or they thought it poſſible for *themſelves* to be.

Out of a full perſuaſion of this Truth, may none of us, *of what Rank or Station* ſoever, think our ſelves *too Wiſe* to be caution'd againſt Sins of ſo Preſumptuous and dangerous a kind, or *too Good*, to ſtand in need of ſo ſeaſonable an Admonition. There is a time when the moſt knowing Perſon may ſuffer himſelf to be miſled by thoſe who are more thoroughly vers'd in the Art of Deciving; and when Men of honeſt and ſincere Intentions may be over-reacht by thoſe, who neither intend, deſire, nor are to be prevail'd upon by any Ties whatever, to do well. Againſt the ſecret Attempts of Perſons of ſuch dangerous Deſigns, and of ſo infamous a Character, we muſt fortify our Souls, by keeping at the greateſt diſtance from the Infection ſpread by 'em; applying thoſe Words of the Patriarh to our ſelves, *O my Soul come not thou into their Secrets, unto their Aſſembly, mine Honour be not thou united!*

If we thus improve, to our ſpiritual Advantage the unhappy Occaſion of our aſſembling together at this time, we may reaſonably hope, that God will lay aſide the fierceneſs of his juſt Diſpleaſure, and ſuffer himſelf at length to be entreated for the Land; *That he* will reſtore in his appointed Time, after the effuſion of much Chriſtian Blood, *Peace within Her Walls, and Plenteouſneſs within Her Palaces*; *That he* will give a timely Check to thoſe *unnatural* Diviſions that do now rage among us, and *to that* Spirit of Atheiſm, Irreligion and Profaneneſs, which ſo viſibly infeſts the Chriſtian Church: In a word, that he will waſh away the Guilt of this Days Sin, and of all our other Tranſgreſſions, in the Blood of his dear Son; which Blood we know ſpeaketh better things, than that of *Abel*.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, &c.

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